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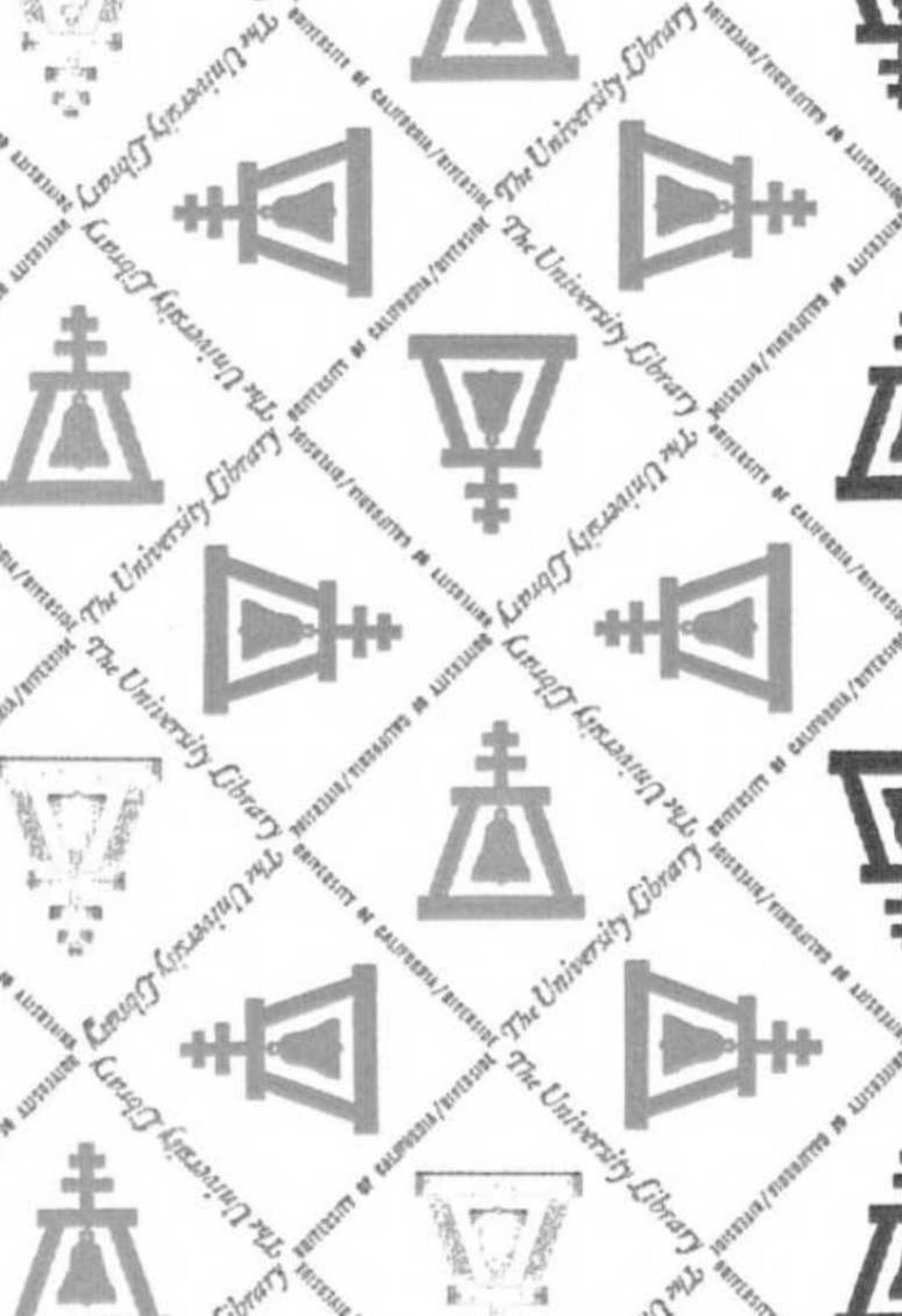
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SELF-
AMUSEMENT
AND
ITS
SPECTRES

OTHER WORKS BY DR. BELL

NOW PROCURABLE THROUGH

THE GOLDEN HIND PRESS

TAORMINA

ART-TALKS WITH RANGER

THE MYSTERY OF WORDS

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PAINTING

THE RELIGION OF BEAUTY

WOMAN *FROM* BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

THE WORTH OF WORDS

THE CHANGING VALUES OF ENGLISH SPEECH

&c.

SELF-AMUSE-MENT

BY

DR. RALCY HUSTED BELL

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EDITION FOR SUBSCRIBERS BY
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NEW YORK CITY
1929

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To

EDWARD HARPER THOMAS

One of the best friends

Anybody ever had

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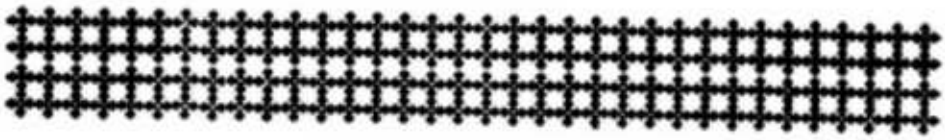
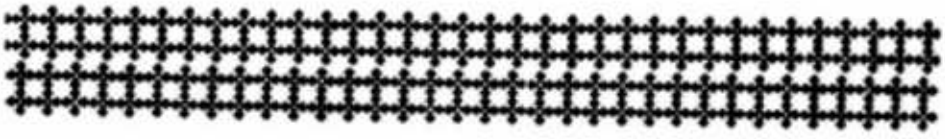


PROLOGUE



The Signs of Sin

A YOUNG man of twenty called on an old Doctor. The patient was agitated, blushing, hesitant.

"What can I do for you?" asked the Doctor.

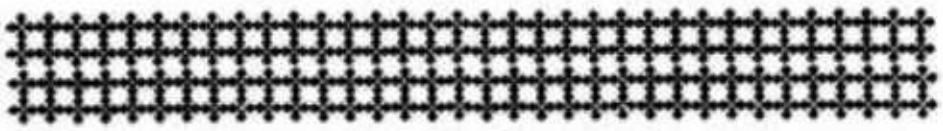
"You ought to know by looking at me," replied the young man.

"I think I do," said the Doctor, "and I ought to kick you out of my office for your silly nonsense. You are crazy. You think I can see in your face the signs of a secret sin. Am I right?"

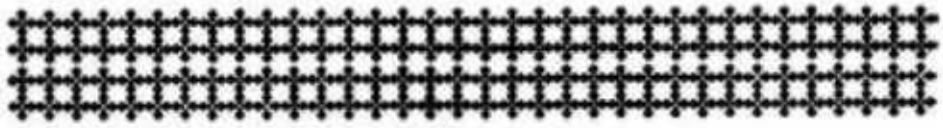
"Yes sir! They say you can tell it by looking at one that does it. I want to get cured."

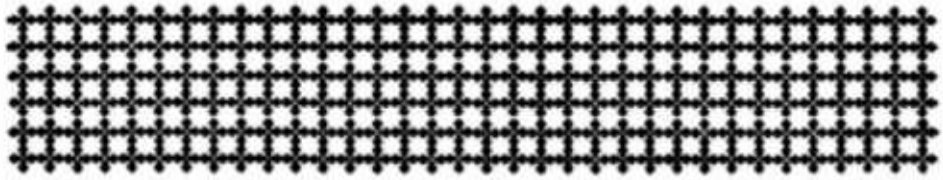
The Doctor spent an hour on the boy. Sensible advice, firmly impressed, cured him then and there. The ghost that shadowed his self-consciousness was destroyed by commonsense, once and for all. His fears left him. Self-respect returned. He stepped out of the Doctor's office, a man among men.

That boy is now an elderly Vice-President of one of our large financial concerns. He is happy and enormously wealthy —an unusual combination. He has a charming family. All he has, he owes to an hour's talk with an old Doctor that happened to be both kindly and sensible, and who has been in his grave over a quarter of a century. Let me tell you something about him, for I knew him well.



THE DOCTOR





One of the most charming personalities that I have ever known was that of a poet whom I shall call, The Doctor. I call him the Doctor chiefly to conserve his anonymity, but also because he was, in a way, a distinguished American physician.

As a sketchy background to his character, his experiences and opinions, let me say that he was born in the Middle East when that region of our country, emerging from the pioneer period, already had formed into states. He was buffeted into manhood therefore by the hard conditions of the "Middle Border". His early education was acquired much after the

manner of Lincoln's; and as Lincoln turned his sad experiences into humor, so this boy turned his into poetry.

The Doctor was the only person I have ever known that had a vocabulary of between sixty-five and seventy thousand words under current control. He is the only poet I know of who composed poems, corrected and reduced them to final form, without making so much as a scratch on paper during the process. On many occasions, I have heard him repeat poems that he had never taken the trouble to write down. These unwritten poems, he told me, would run into hundreds.

It was he who taught prosody to one of the best-known of our American poets. He not only taught him prosody, but

he laid out patterns for some of his most popular poems. The Doctor, for instance, suggested rhythm, rhyme, and meter for several of the young poet's verses that now seem most firmly fixed in our literature.

The Doctor had not only a passionate greed for words and a singular mastery over them, but he possessed almost an uncanny feeling for their subtleties—for the right word in the right place. He knew the vocabulary of poetry too well ever to violate that vocabulary; and although his knowledge of the works of the great poets was searching, yet he was strong enough to resist their influence in the compostion of his own verse. In other words, he went directly to life—to the deep, primitive emotions—for

his poems, not to the poems of others.

He made a few superb lyrics that, once heard, haunt the memory. His narrative poems always were, at least pictorially, true. One of his dramatic poems is powerful enough to stir the blood; and his comic verses are perhaps more humorous than those of 'Gene Field. Withal, his works in poetry, in prose and medicine, are unknown to-day outside a few connoisseurs.

As a man, the Doctor was highly respected for his ethics, and esteemed for his engaging personal traits. As a physician, he was praised by his colleagues for original investigation, and greatly admired for his independent thought and quaint but sound philosophical essays.

This then is the loosely-sketched background. Now for a glimpse at his inner traits of character; at some of his personal and professional experiences—kept, for the most part, strictly to himself; and at his convictions on a certain subject which, in his day, could not be given to the public—even had he so desired.

When the Doctor was a very old man, and I a very young one, we used to meet occasionally for talk-fests, but principally on my part to pick up the few crumbs of wisdom that my mind could digest.

For hours and hours, sometimes nearly the night through, we discussed an amazing variety of subjects. That is to say, his tact led me to feel at the time that I was taking part in the discussion. In plain truth,

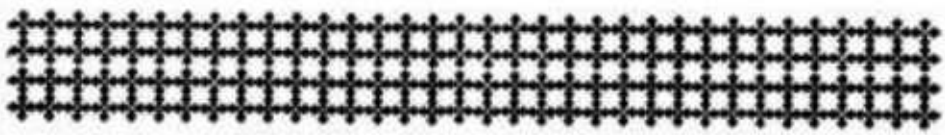
the Doctor did most of the talking and I nearly all the listening.

I remember the night very well when the subject of Self-Amusement came up for the first time. We were in his office which was detached from the house. It was late in November. The trees were bare; there was snow on the ground; a cold wind was blowing under very bright stars. We sat rather close to an old big-bellied stove, very dirty and stained with tobacco-juice. I can recall how he held in his right-hand a short poker which he used to accentuate his remarks and to stir up the coals. He chewed tobacco and I smoked. I remember all the grades of his laughter: the low soft chuckles, the ripples which were almost musical, and the

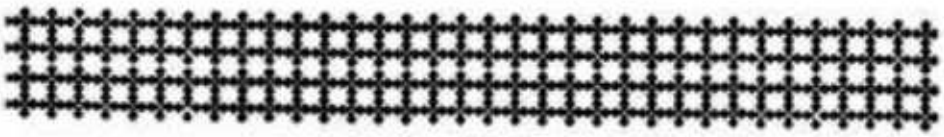
explosions of mirth that seemed to tally the gusts of wind about the squat eaves of the drab little office-building. I remember thinking how naturally his laughter fell in with the wind, now shaking the bare branches, or playing about the eaves, then dancing away over a snowy landscape to be lost under the bright stars.

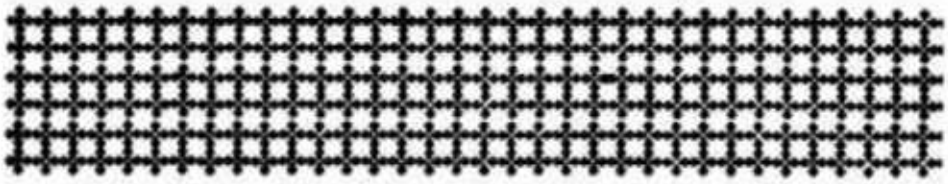
I can not repeat his exact words now, nor can I give his ideas and reminiscences in their logical order; but I recollect all the essentials of what he said then and at later times relating to sexual solitaire. I wish I could describe the smile on his deeply wrinkled face when he began — but that is hopeless. The best I can do is to call it sunny. It seemed to me like mellow sunlight playing over brownish crags that were con-

tinually changing form without losing identity. At any rate, he began somewhat like this:



Self-Amusement
And Its Attendant Evils





All this wretched stuff spread by reputable doctors and disreputable quacks is horrible. Self-Amusement and its attendant evils! They themselves create most of the evils and plant them in the resilient minds of youth, where they grow by festering. What a pity these propagators of evil can't be held responsible for sowing such vicious seed!

Think for a moment. Use just ordinary commonsense. Forget what you've read in books on the matter. Leave out of your mind all the big words of science on psychopathia sexualis, and the like. Dismiss religious ehtics. What

have we? Something so old and so natural that already in ancient times there were mythologies based on it. The principle of androgyny is deep in zoology. We find it paralled in psychology. In the human anatomy we see vestigial organs of the opposite sex. In man we encounter woman, in woman man. My own opinion is that the prevalent form of Self-Amusement, being compensatory, is just as natural but not as strong as normal co-operative pleasure between the sexes.

You always find something comparable to commonsense everywhere in nature. It makes no difference where you look. Wherever you do look, there you'll find it. Take drugs. Why can so few be depended on? Because they act really in a commonsense-way, while we

do not administer them in that way. What is chemistry but exquisite commonsense? What else is science—exact science—but a little co-ordinated commonsense of nature? Geometry, mathematics — anything you please — it's all natural commonsense. Take any phenomenon; analyse it; explain it by some other method than that which is commonsense at the bottom, and you become fantastic. Nature inevitably works by commonsense-methods. Man is the only thing in nature that puts over nonsense; and that he won't do forever. If he keeps up the experiment long enough, it will wipe him out.

Now as genesis is one of nature's deep purposes, she makes genetic pleasure more general than the androgynous, so to

speak, and in certain other senses, stronger. In the course of immeasurable epochs, along comes a series of phenomena that we have grouped and called, sociological. As social complexities increase; as the social instincts become intenser or, as we say, evolve, the great trend is toward genetic pleasure. From gnetic pleasure has sprung another, still higher — a tendency toward something entirely different from the genetic. We call it love—hedonistic affection.

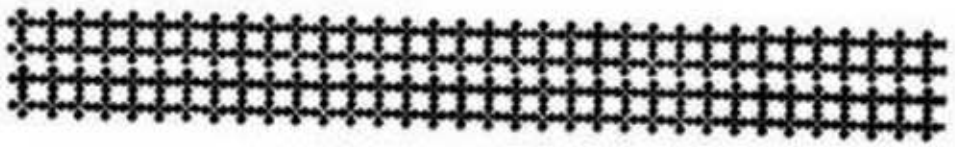
Nevertheless, varying with the individual, you will find a phase of pleasure in Self-Amusement that is more intense than genetic, or co-operative, pleasure. There's a reason for that. The imagination is called upon to a greater degree. One who is indulging in

solitary amusement must create one's mate wholly from the imagination. A kind of romance invests the act. It has an aura of primitive poetry. The imagination is stimulated —deeply stirred; but as it embraces only the ideal, it fails to become ideal.

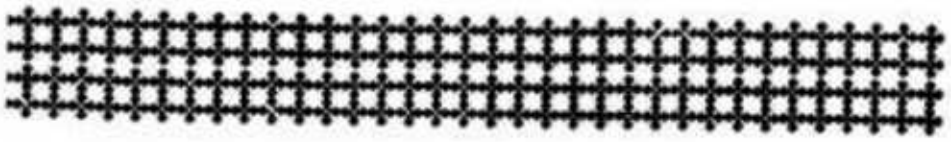
The same commonsense-appeal made by nature reaches her children in many different ways. For one reason or another, desire becomes masterful and will not be denied. Then what happens to a young boy or girl, or to a mature man or woman? Desire has reached a high point in its ever-changing curve. At that point, let us say, co-operative opportunity is lacking. I ask, what happens? Something violent, or something harmonius. Nature provides an alternative—some-

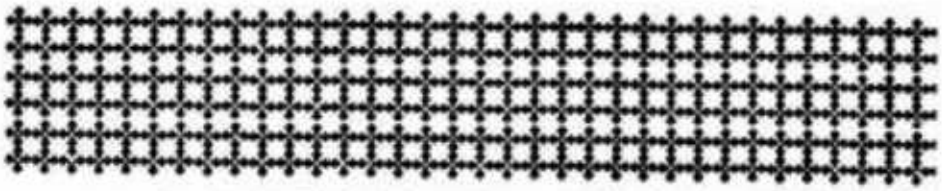
thing harmonious with her commonsense–I call it Self-Amusement, to be euphemistic. Avaricious quacks, ignorant doctors, and erudite specialists, alike—all call it by disgusting names. These names have added odium to the act. Man also devised an alternative. What is it? A violence to the harmony of nature: estoppage, inhibition! What happens when this choice is made? That depends. Perversion may follow. Horrible union between two of the same sex. Again, the desire may be transmuted into something totally different from nature's grand trend; something wholly at variance also with the higher tendency that I have called hedonistic affection, or love in its best sense. You know what often happens to celibates, especially to those un-

reasonably religious; and we both know about 'the divagations of hysterical virgins', referred to by Calmeil in his De la Folie.



Spectres





Now according to reason, according to every known law of nature, according to clinical data, according to the plainest commonsense, what are the evils of Self-Amusement? The act is no more unnatural, no more harmful than the co-operative act between mates. Why should it be? Certainly, if it were, the race would have destroyed itself ages and ages ago. The act, as a physiological function, is not in any sense an outlaw, physiologically considered. Of course, like all other functions, it is possible to overdo it. Too much of anything, however 'normal' it may be, is yet to much. Overeating is a common example.

How about the mental reaction? In a state of nature, it produces no other effect than the act which is performed purely for genetic purposes. The temporary keen stimulation of the imagination is followed merely by temporary depression. The untoward reactions are produced by society.

But you mustn't think that I am blind or indifferent to the undoubted, necessary, commonsense-differences in effect —principally emotional effect —between sexual solitaire and the two-handed game under the rules of a splendid love. To deny these differences is to deny evolution, to deny the differences between colors — between day and night. Love permits the lovers — man and wife, say— to experience, dur-

ing a period of wholesome physical weariness immediately following love's labors, a romantic exaltation and a salubrity of soul unknown to any other consummation in the whole field of art.

However, I am not speaking of that now. We'll come back to it again. What I want to make clear to you is that when the mental reactions to solitaire are unfavorable to health and disturbing to peace-of-mind, it will be found that the cause lies not in the act itself but in over-indulgence; or in the consciousness of having sinned, of having violated religious ethics; or, even more commonly, the mental anguish comes from the poisonous teachings of ignornace inculcated during our early years — the propaganda of greedy charlatans wherein

it is asserted over and over again that the act is self-polluting and physically depleting; that it produces impotence and causes insanity; that it marks the features with the hieroglyphics of shame; and a lot of similar rotten nonsense.

All such assertions are mere ghosts, spooks, spectres reared to torture the mind and to haunt the self-consciousness of poor victims — not victims of the androgynous act and its consequences, but victims of hideous fear planted in the minds of helpless beings by vicious quacks for their own gain, by ignorant doctors and parents doing their best, by a false system of ethics that is blind to the phenomena of nature, or by a system of religious ethics that has arbitrarily created a sin without knowing

what is displeasing to the deity. I ask you, can the human mind conceive divine attributes? Can it fathom divine purpose? Does anyone know whether his parteiular deity actually exists in cosmos, in all respects, as it does in his own imagination?

All such things are wickedly false. Morals have nothing whatever to do with the matter. How could it be otherwise? A lone man on a remote island is not subject to morals. Whatever he may do can not affect anybody else. If he goes naked, he offends nobody because nobody is there to take offense at what one might choose to regard as indecent. If he works on Sunday, it is his own business; or, at the utmost stretch of absurdity, it is a matter between him and God. If he spits tobacco-juice on his

grass-mat, there is no one to scold him. He can't lie about anybody, nor steal from anybody, nor murder anybody. He can't even commit adultery. . . No, No! Ethics begin where there are two or more sentient beings in contact or possible contact. Secret Self-Amusement, therefore, can not in itself be immoral because it affects nobody else. The act is as isolated as the lone man on a remote island. The only immoral thing about it is the spectre — the horrible ghost — reared in the mind of youth by ignorant parents, false teachers, false preachers, and false doctors. Such phantoms thrust into the pliant mind of childhood turn into complexes of one kind and another to torture the infected being through its whole life.

The frightful traditions of evil surrounding the act were started by an Englishman at the beginning of the 18th century, and helped along by Tissot, Lallemand, and many other more ignorant and contemptible writers on the subject.

We oughtn't to have to go back to the Greeks of an earlier era for a little commonsense as we do for a great deal of art —but it seems that we do. At the highest level of civilization, Self-Amusment was, to all purposes, free from opprobrium. There were many reasons for that; but it would take too long to go into them. Anyhow, along came a new religion with its stringent system of ethics to play the devil with commonsense and to upset human nature. You know, a religion be-

gins to make taboos at its birth, and it never stops until it is dead. The very ethics that outlawed the act was, in fact, a means to encourage it. To be sure, it put a ban on 'pleasures of the flesh' all along the line; but as the weakest part of the line was in the secrecy of this act, it was there that the line oftenest gave way. So it is not surprising to find that under the severest restrictions sexual solitaire flourished to its most pernicious degree.

You might ask, Isn't it in some way harmful? I answer, Yes and No. You don't need a doctor to tell you when it is. If no serious depression follows, it has done no harm — possibly some physiological good. It all depends. If it acts as a sedative; if it prevents grave obsessions; if it serves

the purpose of a crutch when the urge is strong and the will is lame; if it acts as a bridge over a difficult pass, it is good, no matter what you say to the contrary. If it keeps a young girl from the disgrace of promiscuity and forbidden motherhood, can you condemn it? If it keeps a young man from practices that are taboo all over the civilized world; if he is saved from the misfortune of loathsome diseases so airily spread by the 'painted ladies of joy', is it so awfully bad?

The men who buy their pleasure from these 'women of joy' regard themselves, and society regards them, merely as a little wild. The world lightly speaks of the 'sowing of wild oats'. As a matter of fact, these men are on a lower moral level than the man is

who seeks his placebo by himself. The two acts are virtually the same. The chief difference between them is that the solitairist is not helping further to degrade some unfortunate woman, nor laying himself liable to detestable disease, never wholly curable. Even so-called Narcissism, so horrifying to our alarmist brethren, isn't necessarily morbid, unless the esthetic sense of pleasure for the nude in art is morbid.

No, we must use our commonsense. Regard it as an evil, if you wish! Just the same, you are bound to admit that the evil is of no moment compared with the others that it so naturally and so easily avoids. In my own practice, covering a period of over fifty years, I have prescribed the act with

the best of physical and moral results.

On the other hand, I have condemned the practice in many cases. I disapprove it as a practice because, as I said, the grand trend in nature is toward genetic pleasure. Besides, I do not encourage Self-Amusement for the same reason that I should not keep opening the safety-valve of a locomotive when there is no need, knowing that automatically it would open itself in case of need. I should not like to see it become a habit in a patient. Apparently, nature does not want it to be a habit. She makes use of it rather as a placebo in nervous-glandular emergencies. But then, neither do I believe in making a habit of the two-handed game. Habit degrades it. My notion

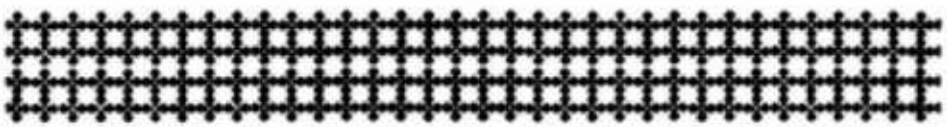
is that the co-operative act should take place, first, for genetic purposes; second, for love during the high moods of the soul; third, for the satisfaction of function when the urge of desire becomes stress, and the stress demands relief.

Like you, I abhor pornographic literature and pictures, and all that sort of thing. The young need nothing of the kind. The old should be too wise. . . In a word, I am very much opposed to the unnatural stimulation of desire, just as I reprobate the unnatural repression of desire. We can't teach nature anything. All we know, we have learned from her. All we ever shall know, we must learn from her.

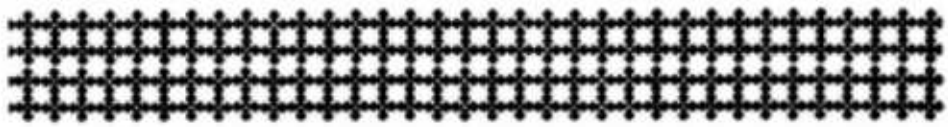
We should not inflame desire in youth, nor try to frighten it out of the young—it can't

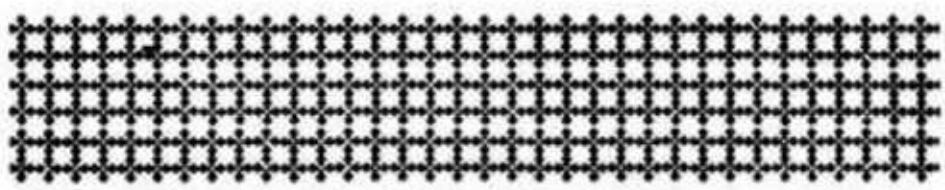
be done. Guide it, yes! Enlighten the young mind. Administer reasonable, not brute, discipline. Help youth over hard roads. Give support to weak morals. Soothe wounded morals. Don't poison the wounds with fear. I'd as soon think of striking my daughter with a club as I would of terrifying her with the bogey of sin. I don't know what a sin is because I don't know just exactly what offends God. I do know somewhat of Christian ethics — which you accept, or you don't. You can't get anywhere discussing that matter. For my part, I think the system is man-made as truly as the system of secular ethics is. But no matter. Let's not stuff our children's minds with nonsense. Why claim to know what we don't and can't? As it is, we

know enough to be partly reasonable and wholesomely emotional. We can try to be truthful. It's pretty hard, sometimes; but we can try. We can be helpful to each other, young and old. We don't have to be reformers and censors. We can be good citizens, good fathers and mothers, without first becoming angels.



A Frank Admission





Before I tell you something of others whose lives have touched my experience, let me tell you somewhat of myslf. It is not a confession. I hate confessions; and I am shy of the fluent confessor, no matter where I meet him — in literature, in the church, in every-day life. This is merely an admission. I make it because it is true. I have respect for certain kinds of truth — contempt for some others. Naturally, I'd not go out of my way to make this admission to strangers. That would not be sensible. What I say to you is all right. It's between ourselves. You are studying medicine. Someday you'll be a doctor. I hope you'll

be a sensible doctor as well as a successful one. I wish you nothing better than the wisdom of commonsense. Then you'll be knowing, kind, courageous, honest, and all the rest of it.

Now as to myself. As you know, I was born in the country. The conditions of my early years were the usual conditions of country life in my time. The environment was sordid, ugly, beautiful, romantic, painful, and joyous. The climate of our souls was similar to that in which we found our bodies. We had our dark days and days that were bright. We had all kinds of weather. We had all the ups-and-downs of emotion; and we knew times of hard-scratching and of easy-going. No matter. I am not relating my biography. It would take too long to tell it, and

you'd not find it specially interesting.

We were discussing Self-Amusement. I admit the practice. I don't know when it began. I was too young to remember, now; but I know it continued until I married, at the age of nineteen. Sometimes I amused myself several times a day. At other periods, two or three times a week. I tried my level best to keep desire down; and I only resorted to its temporary suppression by self-induced pleasure when it put its head up, looked me squarely in the eye, and refused to down. The act never became a habit with me, although it was a frequent refuge.

I heard all about its immorality and its attendant evils. I lived with its spectres night and day. I thought God was pained

when His eye followed me to the haymow, to a nook behind the barn, to the backhouse. Yet when the urge reached the degree of stress, I amused myself. For the time being I forgot spectres; braved the disapproval of the Lord; took a chance at becoming insane; ignored the threat that my features would infallibly be marked with shame; that I'd become impotent and unfit for married life. For the moment I surrendered unconditionally to the imagination. There was my dream-mate. I saw everything, every movement, every organ, every curve—everything that I craved more than I craved any other thing on earth or in heaven.

I had read in 'a doctor's book' that Self-Amusement produced certain well-known

changes in the features. So, following the act, I gently massaged my face, pinched my nose, patted my cheeks, and so on, in order to counteract the formative influence of my 'secret sin'. I passed through the anguish of fear each time, and each time I made mighty resolutions never again to succumb. Sometimes I even prayed for strength to carry out my resolutions. It was all the same. The next time was the next time.

When I was somewhere about the age of sixteen, I began to doubt the moonshine I had heard and read. I tried to use my reason, and did actually succeed in mustering to my aid a little commonsense. The year before I married, I began to 'read medicine' with a country doctor. What I really

did was to read everything about sex that I could find in his meagre library. I was partial to the books that were illustrated.

Six months after our marriage, my wife and I scraped together our resources, amounting to six-hundred dollars. With this small fortune, we went to a city that had a Medical College. There we took two rooms and started housekeeping. About two years after matriculating, I was graduated. Since then I've been an M.D. in the active practice of medicine.

My real study of medicine only began when I put out my shingle. I studied hard, observed closely. Professionally, I tried to do the square thing. I have been fairly successful, according to the standards I

set up for myself. My married life has been very happy. My children, I think, are unusually bright.

The point is this: So far as I can see, the practice of Self-Amusement, which began at a very early age and continued until my nineteenth year, never harmed me mentally, morally, nor physically. To be frank, I've taken refuge in the act all through my life, but only on such occasions as the absence or the sickness of my wife, or when some attractive patient tempted me to the verge of peril.

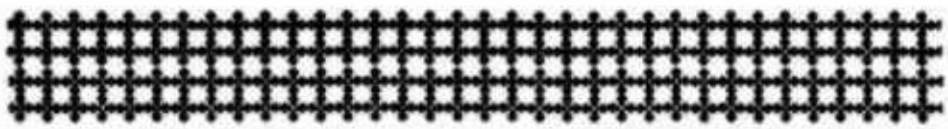
Briefly, that is my own experience. The experience of one person counts for very little. Yet, taking it with my professional experience, it has, I think, afforded me some basis for the convictions I hold on the

subject. I could tell you of hundreds and hundreds of men, women, and children who indulged in Self-Amusement to my certain knowledge; and I have never known one to suffer evil effects. The striking thing about it is that something like 72 per cent. of the cases that have come under my observation showed mentality above the average. Morally, they ranged about the same as the rest of us; and, so far as I could judge, they seemed to be about as healthy. When you stop to think of it, it is not odd that most persons, male and female, who indulge in Self-Amusement should be of superior mentality. For it is only natural that where the vitality is strong enough to force them to the expediency of an act regarded by society as sinful, disgraceful,

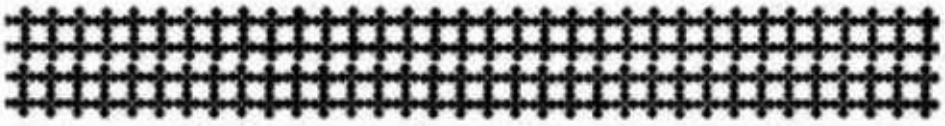
immoral, and degrading, the mind of such persons should be, also, unusually strong—or exceptionally weak.

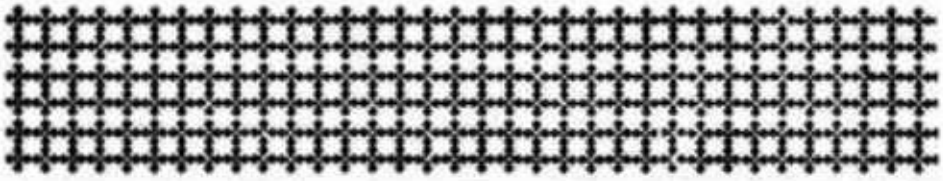
We all know that the attitude of society toward this and kindred matters is largely a pose. I am willing to accept it as a pose in the right direction; but I insist that there is a lot of hypocrisy in it. The fleeing thief cries, 'Stop thief'! We most loudly berate others for doing what we do, ourselves, or have done. Every doctor, every priest, knows how almost universal is this game of solitaire. Its universality, however, is no argument in its favor — no more so than the universality of superstition is an argument in favor of superstition. Majorities count for nothing unless they happen to be right, which seldom occurs. Still, why

should a sensible person get ribbed up over what everybody does? Why should he be ashamed of himself because he has done something that he knows nearly everybody else has done, physically or mentally? Don't forget that I say, physically or mentally! He needn't boast about it. He needn't be vain over it. But if he's sensible, he'll drop it from his mind; he'll not worry over it; and if he's decent, he won't try to scare the living lights out of some youngster for doing what he did when he was a youngster—and perhaps is still doing.



A Vision





Many Novembers have passed since the old Doctor and I sat near the big-bellied stove, talking the windy night out. But I have not forgotten what he said. I have not forgotten the smile that played over his features, as sunlight over crags. I recall how like the wind was his laughter. In some strange way, it seemed so to me then. I can see him now as he sat there with the short poker in his hand. In the magic land of memory he stirs the coals—still spits tobacco-juice to sizzle on the stove's hot belly. I still hear his words, and I understand them better now than I did then. They do not shock me,

since I find myself more in accord with his philosophy.

Since that night in November, I have read the masters on romantic and genetic love. I have done more. I have tried to follow the devious wanderings of the Great Primeval Desire, or Protean Demiurge, that changes but never dies: something monstrous and magnificent by turn—something gentle as the mother with her first babe—something crueler than fangs.

Here however I am concerned with it only in one role, which the Doctor humorously, I suspect, rather than euphemistically, called Self-Amusement or Solitaire. I have heard him refer to it also as Blind Man's Buff.

At any rate, with him I do

not recommend it to those who can do better — only to those who face the alternative: that, or something much worse. With him I deplore the necessity of the act; and with him I despise the silly spectres that fill with fear the minds of those that have been forced into the secret nooks of solitary pleasure. But spiritual torture, assuredly, can not uproot the necessity of the act; and if there is such a thing on earth as reform, it is not born of persecution and fear. It can only come through change of condition—at the bottom, biological perhaps—aided by enlightenment, rational and sympathetic discipline.

Here we encounter a phenomenon older than humankind. Whatever our ethical attiude toward it may be, the phe-

nomenon persists, as a granite mountain indifferent to the winds. Since we can not destroy the phenomenon, let us behold it, when we must, with eyes that see other things than vile dragons crawling through slime.

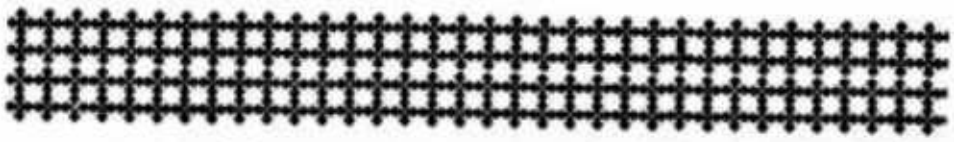
Let us not be fooled by hypocrisy, nor blinded with abhorrence. Happy lovers, filled with ardent sensuousness and on fire with beautiful fevers, should pity the unsatiated that are forced to take refuge in an artificial paradise. Our very love for women may betray us to a hideous chimera. Sometimes, from our noblest virtues our worst vices spring.

Young girls and young men dream of love. It seems to them like a marvelous garden, a paradise beflowered and perfum-

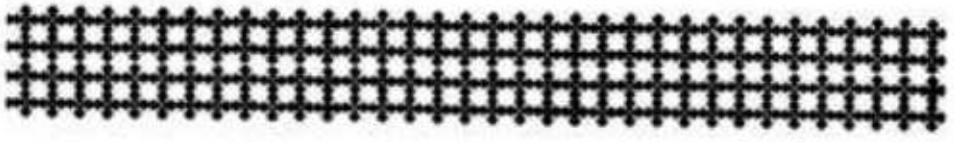
ed. Yet they do not know the flowers of that garden, for they have never crossed its threshold. It is a closed garden. They contemplate it from the outside; and their chaste ignorance adorns it with beauties and intoxications.

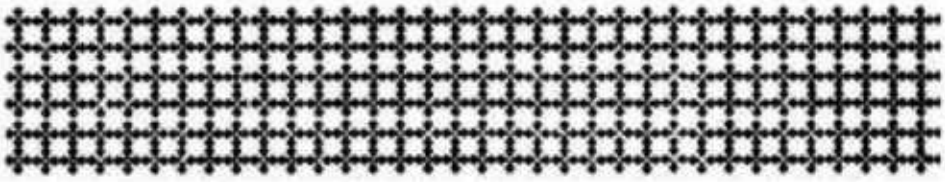
Then some day they stand against the enchanted gate; they feel an unknown presence. Protean Desire appears in one of its roles. For the moment, the old androgynous urge is the young Cupid. He smiles. He is sweetly mocking. His look is caressing. His gestures have inexpressible charm. He gives off unknown, captivating attraction. He points to the gate, which they see as in a dream. He offers to lead them through. They are filled with tremulous emotion. They are grateful.

They enter the gate. They awaken to find that they have only passed through a vision.



Epilogue





Finally, let it be clearly understood that the Doctor was discussing only the most common phase of auto-erotism, which he jocularly called Self-Amusement. He knew how prevalent it was amongst mankind since the earliest historic times—to say nothing of many of the lower animals. He condoned but did not encourage it. Many years ago, his opinions relating to this matter were virtually the same as those of the recognized authorities, to-day. In a general sense, he did not regard it as harmful but rather, with Forel, as compensatory and, with Ellis, as neither moral nor immoral.

The Doctor was well aware also of its allied phases which, like a sinister web, reach in many directions over a wide field more or less pathologic. This field has been admirably covered by such able specialists as Havelock Ellis, August Forel, James Foster Scott, Oskar Berger, G. Stanley Hall, F. S. Brockman, Julian Morcuse, Lawson Tait, Krafft-Ebing, Schrenck-Notzing Iwan Bloch, Freud, Koch, Moll, Adler, Guttceit, Nacke, Block, Morgalia, Ferriani, Ernst, Niaporo, Spitzka, Dana, Deslandes, Lowenfeld, Erb, Toulouse, Godfrey, Curschmann, Furbringer, Marro, Hirschsprung, Ploss, Bartels, Northcote, and a host of others of some and of no importance.

However, with the possible exception of Havelock Ellis,

their works are not recommended to the general reader. The average healthy person acquires from such books chiefly mental uneasiness. From them, for the most part, the afflicted one can get no help. By reading them he is likely to become greatly confused; and therefore he is more than likely to increase his misery. The pathologic cases require the help of specialists in nervous diseases, trained experts in medicine, psychology, etc.

My object in passing along the old Doctor's persuasions is precisely the same as his was in giving an hour's advice to the demoralized stripling mentioned in the Prologue. For it is high time that the ghosts reared in young minds by ignorant fanatics and immoral quacks, and others, should be

laid. In addition, this is a protest against the hypocrisy of adult Pharisees — futile, no doubt, but a protest nevertheless.

While I regard it as highly moral to allay foolish but disturbing fears and spectral sins, I should not like to be misunderstood as an advocate of Self-Amusement. It does not follow that to excuse an act in certain circumstances is to advocate it. Make the best of it, yes; but avoid it when you can; and best of all, forget it!

I do not find myself wholly in agreement with Ellis, and some others, on the subject. For, with them, I can not consider the act, in all instances, as: "a purely physiological phenomenon". Doubtless it is that with those of brutish temperament just as the "normal" act

is purely physiological amongst the low orders of human beings, or with couples in certain narcotized conditions; and I admit also that Self-Amusement, other things being equal, is more likely to be purely a physiological function than is normal mating. That is one of the minor reasons why I do not encourage it.

But the major reason in favor of mating must be, naturally, the wide imperious call of genesis; and, even higher than that to my mind, as it was to the old Doctor's, is the imperial psychic call between a man and a woman—the cry of love, not for genesis but for spiritual companionship.

In this companionship we find, under favorable conditions, many powerful, complex emotions co-ordinated into the

glory that is romance at its best. These wonderful and mysterious emotions, emerging from chaos, make possible all the nobler beauties known to our kind.

Here it is that love-hunger grows at the feast until it turns into that ecstatic delirium which, for its very unreason, has ever been celebrated in poetry and other forms of art.

Here it is that mortals may escape space-time dimensions and find infinite freedom in the small closed circle of clasped arms. Here it is that tragedy was first conceived and happiness became more than a beautiful hope.

In this love-union, men and women reach their highest estate; and only in the imponderables of their new realm do they ever find real possession.

No other exaltation of soul bears such fruit.

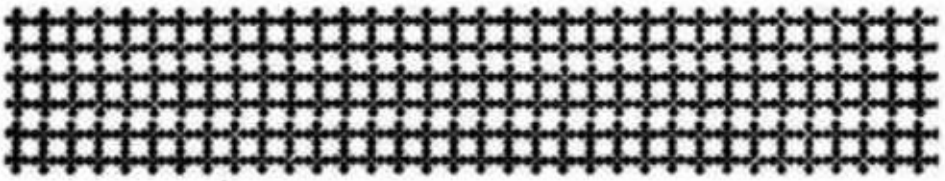
When a man buries his face in the hair of his beloved, that strange butterfly, called his soul, leaves its cocoon for a new world that is very old.

Man and woman did not lose their precious garden through this union, but through it they discovered Eden.

"Love, O uncertain voice that sighs within us and sings! O confused melody that the Creator sends to us, at least once in life, a memory of Eden!"

Sainte-Beuve.

APPENDIX



Prevalence

Oskar Berger, in his Vorlesungen, expresses the opinion that 99 per cent. of young men and women occasionally indulge in Self-Amusement, while the hundredth conceals the truth.

Hermann Cohn accepts the statement as true in Germany.

* * *

". . . . (Self-Amusement) is but a specialized form of a tendency which in some form or in some degree normally affects not only man, but all the higher animals."

Havelock Ellis, Psychology of Sex, Vol. I, p. 163.

* * *

The practice was common as early as ancient Babylonian times; and since "it is found among the people of nearly every race of which we have any intimate knowledge, however natural the conditions under which men and women may live."

Ibid., p. 166.

* * *

"Rohleder considers that during adolescence at least 95 per cent. of both sexes (indulge in Self-Amusement)"

Ibid,, p. 236.

* * *

"Julian Marcuse, on the basis of his own statistics, concludes that 92 per cent. of male individuals have (practiced Solitaire) to some extent in youth".

Ibid,, p. 236.

* * *

"Dukes, physician to Rugby School . . . states that from 90 to 95 per cent. of all boys at boarding school (indulge)"

Ibid,, p. 236.

* * *

"Seerley, of Springfield, Mass., found that about 79 per cent. of students admitted the practice."

Ibid,, p. 236.

* * *

"F. S. Brockman, A Study of the Moral and Religious Life of Students in the United States, reports, among 232 theological students, of the average age of 23½ years and coming from various parts of the United States, 132 spontaneously admitted that (Solitaire) was their most serious temptation and all but one of these admitted that he yielded, 69 of them to a considerable

extent. This is a proportion of at least 56 per cent., the real proportion being doubtless larger, since no question had been asked as to sexual offenses; 75 practiced (Solitaire) after conversion, and 24 after they had decided to become ministers; only 66 mentioned (the normal act) as their chief temptation; sexual temptations outnumbered all others."

Ibid,, p. 236.

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"Moraglia, who made inquiry of 200 women of the lower class in Italy, found that 120 acknowledged either that they still (practice Self-Amusement) or that they had done so during a long period."

Ibid., pp. 236-7.

* * *

"Gualino found that 23 per cent. men of the professional classes in North Italy (practice Self-Amusement) about puberty; no account was taken of those who began later."

Ibid., p. 237.

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"Among the Swiss mountaineers moderate (S-A) is practiced as a rule".

Ibid., p. 237.

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"In hot countries the same habits are found at a more precocious age. In Venezuela, among the Spanish creoles, Ernst found that in all classes boys and girls are infested with the vice of onanism".

Ibid., p. 237.

* * *

"Niceforo, who shows a special knowledge of the working-girl at Rome states . . . that all

the girls without exception give themselves up, during the hottest hours of the day, to (S-A)".

Ibid., p. 237.

* * *

"In France a country curé assured Debreyne that among little girls who came up for their first communion, 11 out of 12 were given to (S-A)."

Ibid., p. 237.

* * *

"The medical officer of a Prussian reformatory told Rohleder that nearly all the inmates over the age of puberty (indulged)".

Ibid., p. 237.

* * *

"Stanley Hall knew a reform school in America where (it) was practiced without exception, and he who could practice

it oftenest was regarded with hero-worship".

Ibid., pp. 237-8.

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"There appears to be no limit to the age at which spontaneous (S-A) may begin to appear."

Ibid., p. 238.

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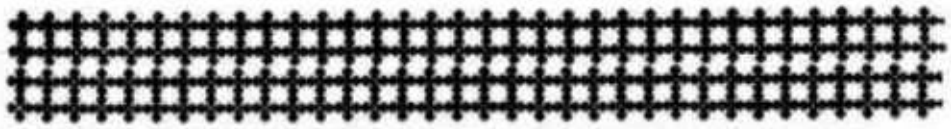
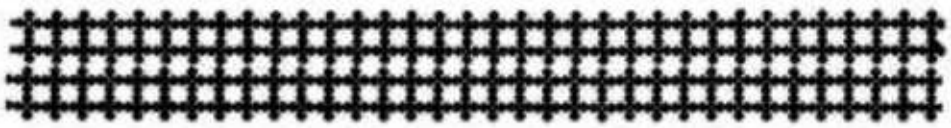
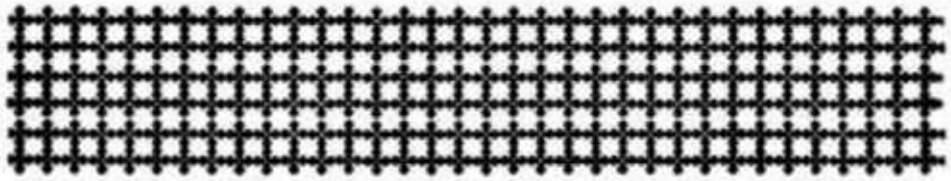


Innocuous Effects





". . . there appears to be little reliable evidence to show that simple (Self-Amusement) in a well-born and healthy individual, can produce any evil results beyond slight functional disturbances, and these only when it is practiced to excess."

Havelock Ellis, Psychology of Sex, Vol. I, p. 250.

* * *

"'In moderation', Erb remarks, '(S-A) is not more dangerous to the spinal cord than natural coitus, and has no bad effects'; it makes no difference, Erb considers, whether the orgasm is effected normally or in solitude. This is also the opinion of Toulouse, of Fur-

bringer, and of Curschmann, as at an earlier period it was of Roubaud."

Ibid., p. 257.

* * *

"That, at the present day, eminence in art, literature, and other fields may be combined with the excessive practice of (S-A) is a fact of which I have unquestionable evidence."

Ibid., p. 266.

* * *

"It is our wisest course to recognize this inevitableness of sexual and transmuted sexual manifestations under the perpetual restraints of civilized life, and, while avoiding any attitude of excessive indulgence or indifference, to avoid also any attitude of excessive horror, for our horror not only leads to the facts being effec-

tually veiled from our sight, but itself serves to manufacture artificially a greater evil than that which we seek to combat".

Ibid., p. 282.

* * *

"It appears to have been largely due to Griesinger, in the middle of the last century, that we owe the first authoritative appearance of a sane, more discriminating view regarding the results of (S-A). Although still to some extent fettered by the traditions prevalent in his day, Griesinger saw that it was not so much (S-A) itself as the feelings aroused in sensitive minds by the social attitude toward (S-A) which produced evil effects. 'That constant struggle', he wrote, 'against a desire which is even overpowering, and to which the individual

always in the end succumbs, that hidden strife between shame, repentance, good intentions, and the irritation which impels to the act, this, after not a little acquaintance with onanists, we consider to be far more important than the primary direct physical effect'. He added that there are no specific signs of (S-A), and concluded that it is oftener a symtom than a cause. The general progress of educated opinions since that date has, in the main, confirmed and carried forward the results cautiously stated by Griesinger. . . . Vogel, Uffelmann, and Emminghaus, in the course of similar studies, have all come to almost similar conclusions. . . . Christian, during twenty years' experience in hospitals, asylums, and private practice in town and country,

has not found any seriously evil effect from (S-A)."

Ibid., p. 253.

* * *

"I think I may affirm that this act does less harm to the constitution in general than the natural".

John Hunter, Treatise on the Venereal Disease, 1786, p. 200.

* * *

"(S-A) does neither more nor less harm than (the co-operative act) practiced with the same frequency, in the same conditions of general health and age and circumstances".

Sir James Paget, Lecture, Sexual Hypochondriasis.

* * *

"(S-A) is considered a vice only because it has been stud-

ied exclusively by physicians under abnormal conditions."

Tillier, L'Instinct Sexuel, p. 270.

* * *

"(S-A) may, in certain circumstances, be a desirable method of relief for adults, and, especially, for women."

G. Hirth, Wege zur Heimat, p. 648.

* * *

"(S-A) is not always a vice such as is fiercely combated by educators and moralists. It is the natural transition by which we reach the warm and generous love of youth, and, in natural succession to this, the tranquil, positive, matrimonial love of the mature man."

Silvio Venturi, Le Degenerazioni Psico-sessuale, 1892, pp. 6-9.

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"Both (S-A) and (the co-operative act) should be classed as sedatives".

W. Xavier Sudduth,
Chicago Medical Record,
March, 1898.

* * *

"All things considered, it must be accepted that (S-A) is part of the doings of nature."

Remy de Gourmont,
Physique de l'Amour,
p. 133.

* * *